

Story 1062 (Transcribed from
tape by Tuncer
Gülensoy; tape
not at ATON.)

Narrator: Münevver Çete
Location: Ortaca nahiye,
Köyceğiz kaza,
Muğla Province

Date: 1976

The Ten and a Half Children¹ *finger* *Ch*

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Remedy
for
Once there was and once there wasn't a woman who
wanted to be a mother, but this woman never had any
children. One day she went to see the village hoca about
this problem. The hoca told her to do certain things and
say certain prayers. If she did those things, he said,
then she would have ten and a half children

After some time had passed, this prediction came
true. The woman had ten and a half children. As they
started to grow up, however, she discovered that she had
another problem, and that was that she could not keep
them all fed. No matter how much bread she baked, it was
not enough to satisfy their hunger. One day when they
were all together, she took a mattock and started beating
them with it. Before long, all of the children were dead

¹Tales about one or more tiny children--"Finger Children" of Tom Thumb dimensions--are common in the Turkish oral tradition. A sterile woman receives some sort of supernatural aid that enables her to bear a number--sometimes as many as 100--impossibly tiny children. Sometimes one of these children is so much more diminutive than the rest that he is called a half-child. Inasmuch as the whole scenario is imaginative, the subsequent "killing" of all but one of these microchildren is not the shocking atrocity it would otherwise be.

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except Half-Child, who had hidden in a shoe.

After that Half-Child decided to travel in order to seek his fortune. As he traveled along, he came upon a giant woman trying to wash clothes. She was not able to do this very well, however, because she could not make the water in her laundry cauldron boil. She asked Half-Child, "Will you come and light the fire beneath my cauldron?"

for if I come that close to you, you will eat me."

I shall not touch you," she said. When Half-Child was lighting the fire, he farted, and as he did so, a nearby pine tree toppled and fell crashing to the ground. The giant woman then started shouting to all of the other giants in the area, "Run Run for your lives! Half-Child has knocked down a large pine tree with one fart. None of you could do that! Run! Run!"

Half-Child then continued on his journey. After a while he met a ⁸¹⁻⁸⁴ bear which grabbed him and took him home to its cave. There he discovered a number of other captives who were forced to work in the bear's fields. Half-Child soon decided to become the foreman of these laborers. Every morning after that, he whistled loudly to call the

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laborers together, and then he took them to the fields to work. One day, however, the bear became annoyed at Half-Child for making so much noise early in the morning with his whistling.

"Stop that whistling in the morning!" he ordered.

"All right," said Half-Child.

As time went on, the boy did other things that angered the bear. At last, the bear decided to kill Half-Child, but the boy understood this and guarded himself against the bear's plans. One night when the boy knew that the bear intended to kill him, he did not get into his own bed as usual. Instead, he filled the bed with several pieces of wood and then spread the blankets over the wood. Later that night the bear came with a heavy club and beat Half-Child's bed fiercely with it. Certain that he had killed Half-Child, he then went to bed himself.

The next morning the bear was amazed to be awakened again by the whistling of Half-Child. He decided that the boy could not be injured by beating, and so he planned to kill him in another way that night.

This time Half-Child put a log in his own bed, covered it with a blanket, and then hid elsewhere. The bear boiled a large cauldron of water. He then carried it in pails to

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the boy's bed and poured it all over the bed. He then retired to his own bed, thinking that he had killed Half-Child

In the morning he was again awakened by Half-Child's whistle. The bear thought, "What kind of man is this? Can I never beat him at anything?"

While they were working in the fields, the laborers said to Half-Child, "You have defeated the bear twice, but you would not be able to bring him out here into the fields." The boy accepted that bet. He went back to the cave and built a large box. He then said, "Bear Brother, you could not possibly get into this box

"Yes, I can!" said the bear

When the bear climbed into the box, the boy put the lid on it and tied it shut. When the boy dragged the box to the field, he said, "Here is the bear for you

The laborers said, "We do not believe it! Open the box and let us see him!"

for if I did, he would kill all of us." But Half-Child heated a piece of iron and shoved it through the box into the bear's skin. As soon as the hot iron touched the bear, it burst forth from the box and attacked everyone it could see

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While the bear was killing all of the laborers, the boy reheated the piece of iron until it was red hot. He then climbed to the top of the nearest tree and dropped the iron to the foot of the tree. After the bear had killed all of the laborers, he looked for Half-Child. When he saw him in the tree, the bear rushed to that tree, but as he started to climb it, he stepped on the hot iron. It burned him badly, and he ran away howling.